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CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS, INCLUDING THE QUESTIONS OF:
TORTURE AND DETENTION

Written statement* submitted by the International Federation of ACAT (Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[24 January 2001]

*/ This written statement is issued, unedited, as received in English, French and Spanish from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

**The third millenium is here –
and torture still persists**

Aware of the heinous persistence of torture in half the countries of the world,

Recalling the impetus given to the war against torture at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in June 1993 and the solemn promises made at that time, on the eve of the third millenium,

the International Federation of Action by Christians Against Torture (FLACAT) is determined that the international community must continue the efforts it has made so far and not give up the fight.

1. In view of the fact that the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Torture will expire soon,
In view of the importance of his role, particularly for urgent cases,
In view of the hitherto unprecedented universal scope of his mandate,
In view of his excellent work in speeches and reports and his perseverance in helping countries to combat the scourge of torture and abuse,

FLACAT calls on the Commission on Human Rights to renew his mandate.

2. In view of the relatively small number of signatory countries to the Convention against Torture, and the even smaller number having formulated declarations with regard to its Articles 21 and 22, which recognise the Committee Against Torture as a competent body to receive allegations and complaints and act on them,
In view of the large proportion of torture cases among the very countries which have not yet ratified or signed this convention,

FLACAT calls on the Commission on Human Rights to make further efforts to encourage countries to sign the Convention and issue declarations with regard to Articles 21 and 22.

3. Considering the urgent need, which has often been expressed, for a worldwide system of visits to detention centres,
Noting the difficulties encountered by the Working Group charged with drawing up an optional protocol to the Convention against Torture in obtaining an acceptable consensus and finalizing its text,
Having regard to the fact that 41 European countries already have a system of this kind, which has proved effective and which operates judiciously according to the principles of confidentiality and cooperation in a common endeavour to prevent torture,
Whereas this project, which helps to protect people against abuses of power, corresponds to the wishes of the citizens and NGOs of numerous countries in the rest of the world,

As prevention of torture and effective action against abuse should not be confined to the European continent alone, FLACAT calls on the Commission on Human Rights to encourage the countries taking part in the ad hoc working group to make further efforts so that in the near future they can put forward proposals for a worthwhile system.